Press release

Outlook good for utility companies

1 November 2001

The forecast is looking good for demand and resource managers of utility companies thanks to an improved service from the Met Office.

Called the Monthly Outlook, it's set to become an invaluable business planning aid for energy and water companies who require advanced weather information to assess customer demand.

The Monthly Outlook is designed to help planners assess the impact of weather on their business by providing weather forecast information up to 30 days ahead. It's been tailored to meet the specific needs of utilities customers, and comes in easy-to-navigate, simple to understand data sheets that are delivered electronically.

The Met Office has been producing a monthly planning tool for nearly 10 years, but after a series of research meetings with key customers last year the service was re-designed. Feedback on the service was generally positive, but customers felt that the data was presented in a way that was difficult to understand.

The Monthly Outlook is now more customer-focused, with a modern layout that's easy to navigate, making better use of graphics, offering information in a format that's relevant to resource planners and is delivered electronically.

Tim Ormerod, Product Manager for the Monthly Outlook, believes the new-look service will bring many benefits to customers. "We're confident the improved Monthly Outlook is a valuable risk-assessment tool that can help planners anticipate changes in demand more confidently.

"It is invaluable in helping to manage resources more effectively, especially when used alongside shorter-term forecasting services. We're pleased with its new look, and this is the first step in an ongoing process of improving the service."

The Monthly Outlook is a fortnightly service giving utility companies a monthly forecast for 10 different regions in the UK, combining forecaster output, graphics and tabular data. It's based on a state-of-the-art dynamic weather model run a number of times to produce an ensemble of forecasts. As the atmosphere is naturally chaotic and can change dramatically over a month, the ensemble enables the exploration of future outcomes and allows an assessment of the likelihood of different weather conditions occurring.

The service is divided into four main sections.

- Forecasters' outlook - expert advice offered by forecasters
- Outlook data - forecasts of rainfall, minimum and maximum temperatures, degree days and sunshine information
- Summary data - forecast information for the whole month, giving comparisons with the weather 'average', recent history and last year to allow resource demand comparisons
- Probability data - probabilities of different weather scenarios occurring enabling the user to assess the risk of, say, cold weather in the weeks ahead

For more information on the Monthly Outlook or any of the Met Office's short- and medium-range forecasting facilities, please call the Customer Centre on 0845 300 0 300, visit the web site www.metoffice.com or e-mail at enquiries@metoffice.com.

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